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SACRAMENTO FLOOD CONTROL

Since 1986, when an unprecedented series of storms came just hours from overwhelming the city's flood-control system, no issue has been as important to Matsui as securing flood protection for his hometown of Sacramento, CA. He is a tireless advocate for this desperately needed public safety improvement and is fully committed to meeting the 200-year protection level that federal agencies, engineers, and flood-control experts have called a requirement.

Flood control is so crucial to the district because of the City of Sacramento's location at the confluence of the American and Sacramento Rivers. Early settlers chose the site because of its proximity to the Sacramento River, an important transportation route, but along with this commercial convenience comes a threat to person and property. With the help of the Federal Government, Sacramento's residents have invested in numerous flood-control projects. However, as the Army Corps of Engineers has revised the area's hydrology (water-distribution estimates), it deemed the existing system of protection to be insufficient. When the Federal Government agreed to build the Folsom Dam and Reservoir in 1944 following a major flood in December 1937, it was thought that the Dam would provide all the protection Sacramento would need. Yet, because of serious design flaws in how it could manage water flow during a storm, Folsom Dam barely succeeded in protecting the city during major downpours in 1986 and 1997. Current estimates have shown Sacramento's flood-risk to be a severe and urgent concern threatening 400,000 residents and more than \$37 billion in property.

CURRENT AGENDA— 107TH CONGRESS

Folsom Dam Mini-Raise. Matsui is the leading voice in seeking federal approval of and funding for a project to raise the height of Folsom Dam by 7 feet, capping a long effort to reconfigure the original structure and giving Sacramento its long-desired protection against a storm 50 percent greater than the largest in 3,000 years of studied history. According to a September 2001 draft report released by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Folsom Mini-Raise would provide 213-year protection, making Sacramento safe and surpassing the city's 200-year benchmark for adequacy.

On December 5, 2001, Representative Matsui introduced H.R. 3399, authorizing the Folsom Mini-Raise project for Sacramento, California, in accordance with the plan formulated by the Army Corps of Engineers. Passing this bill is first on Matsui's legislative agenda. The plan has the unified support of all stakeholders who would share its cost including the City, the County, the flood control district, and the State of California and also of both California Senators and neighboring Representatives from both parties.

PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1988-1989 Initiated Fight for New Flood Control Following 1986 Floods. Record rainfall in February 1986—now known to be among the largest storms ever concentrated in the watershed—proved the American River’s flood control system to be much weaker than was previously thought as Sacramento was hit by nearly 10 inches of rain within an 11-day period. At the time, it was estimated that three more hours of rainfall would have breached the limits of the system and flooded thousands of homes. In the aftermath of the storm, Representative Matsui had crucial involvement in efforts to protect the city from loss of federally subsidized flood insurance that would have wreaked financial havoc on Sacramento residents and business, to secure emergency repairs to flood control projects, and to begin the process to find a long-term flood control solution for the city.

Key Events:

Protected Sacramento’s eligibility for federally subsidized flood insurance. In 1988, Matsui and then-neighboring Rep. Vic Fazio introduced and shepherded legislation through Congress to avert the eminent threats of a building ban and skyrocketing insurance rates for Sacramento’s low-lying areas. A 1989 flood-zone map from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had been expected to take away eligibility for federally subsidized flood insurance. “Without this legislation, the city’s economy would feel the devastation a building ban and skyrocketing insurance rates can have,” Matsui said. The temporary exemption required that new flood control projects begin within a four-year window. [100th Congress: H.Amdt. 942; Public Law 100-628] [“Bill Easing Flood Rules is Signed,” *Sacramento Bee*, 11/8/88 A1; “U.S. Will Take Hard Look at Area’s Flood-Control System,” *Sacramento Bee*, 4/10/87 B4].

Secured Emergency Repairs to Sacramento Levees. In 1989, Matsui helped persuade the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers into proceeding with a \$24.1 million repair job on the Sacramento River’s deteriorating levees. With a “running clock” on the four-year federal flood insurance exemption he had obtained the previous year, Matsui insisted on immediately beginning efforts to reach the 100-year flood protection prior to 1992 in order to prevent Sacramento from being burdened by exorbitant mandatory flood insurance premiums. This levee repair construction commenced in 1990 and was completed in 1993. [“Big Levee Job Gets Its First Money,” *Sacramento Bee*, 3/24/89 B1].

Commissioned Study to Create Comprehensive Flood Protection for Sacramento. Matsui and Fazio introduced a 1988 bill to authorize construction of a flood-control only dry Auburn Dam and to improve the levee system along the American and Sacramento Rivers. The proposal was supported by Sacramento Mayor Anne Rudin and Chair of the County Board of Supervisors James Streng. “We have to begin the legislative process now,” Matsui said, “We simply can’t wait any longer.” Matsui succeeded in inserting a provision into the 1988 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) requiring executive action to schedule a feasibility study on flood control. [100th Congress, H.R. 5057; PL 100-676] [“A Dam In Time,” *Sacramento Bee*, 7/20/88 B4; “Dry Dam Proposal Unveiled,” *Sacramento Bee*, 7/15/88 A1; “Capital Flood Control Bill Dead for 1988,” *Sacramento Bee*, 9/1/88 B1]. Matsui and Fazio reintroduced their Auburn Dam legislation in 1989 [101st Congress, H.R. 3034] [“Bill Seeks Auburn Dam,” *Sacramento Bee*, 7/28/89 B1].

1989-1996 Multiple Attempts to Construct Auburn Dam. Matsui twice supported the creation of an Auburn Dam in a regional effort to align Sacramento's flood-control interests with water needs in neighboring districts. However, due to the cost, safety considerations, and environmental concerns surrounding the Auburn Dam, it proved politically unfeasible as Congress demonstrated by overwhelmingly rejecting it twice: on the House Floor in 1992 (140-273) and again in committee in 1996 (35-28). Even if the State of California were to immediately approve of the land transfer from the federal government as well as the construction of the Dam, conservative estimates now reveal that it would take more than 30 years for the review and permitting process to unfold and the Dam to be completed. Convinced that proponents of the Auburn Dam cannot complete the multipurpose project within a reasonable length of time, if at all, Matsui advocates other flood control projects to quickly secure Sacramento's flood control safety.

Key Events:

1989 Auburn Dam Recreation Study. Matsui secured money from the federal government to study a proposed National Recreation Area at the Auburn Dam Site. "This study, along with the Army Corps of Engineers study, will supply the answers to many questions we all have about future flood control in the area," Matsui said. At its core, this was an effort to respond to environmentalist concerns surrounding the initial Auburn Dam and to build a coalition supporting it. [101st Congress: H.R.2788] ["Recreation at Auburn Dam Site," *Sacramento Bee*, 7/4/89 B4].

1992 Auburn Dam Support. Matsui and Fazio introduced a bill to build consensus and address both environmental and flood-control concerns by creating a \$700 million dry Auburn Dam. While the project was expected to provide Sacramento with adequate flood protection, it faced massive opposition in Congress from a coalition of taxpayer and environmental concerns. It was defeated on the House floor by a vote of 140-273 in the face of charges that the proposal was too expensive and environmentally unsound. [102nd Congress: H.R. 5414, H.R. 5754, H.Amdt. 871] ["House Kills Plan," *Sacramento Bee*, 9/24/92 A1; "Auburn Dam Defeat," *Sacramento Bee*, 9/25/92 A1].

1996 Auburn Dam Support. In 1996, Matsui joined neighboring Rep. John Doolittle and the entire bipartisan Sacramento delegation in proposing a multi-purpose Auburn Dam to serve as a flood-control and water-supply facility at a cost of over \$1 billion. Doolittle sought the dam to gain new water sources for his district, while Matsui again agreed to support any proposal that would give Sacramento proper flood control. While the entire Sacramento-area congressional delegation united behind this effort, it once again faced massive opposition from a national coalition of taxpayer-advocate and environmental groups. In June, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee defeated the Auburn Dam bill yet again. "We'll continue to work together to protect our community from future flood threats," vowed Matsui, Fazio, and Doolittle in a joint statement. [104th Congress: H.R. 3270] ["United Front on Auburn Dam Bill," 3/15/96 A1; "Big Taxpayer Group Blasts Auburn Dam," *Sacramento Bee*, 4/2/96 B2; "New Auburn Dam Proposal," *Sacramento Bee*, 4/21/96 A1; "Auburn Dam Foes Choke on Six Words," *Sacramento Bee*, 5/12/96 A1; "Auburn Dam Sinks in House," *Sacramento Bee*, 6/28/96 A1; "Moving Beyond the Dam," *Sacramento Bee*, 7/2/96 B6].

1996-2002 Achieved Incremental Improvements While Seeking a Permanent Solution.

When it became perfectly clear in 1996 that an Auburn Dam would not be built following its second failure in Congress, Matsui immediately began a new press for achievable flood control in Sacramento. He has since succeeded in winning more than \$200 million in incremental improvements to Sacramento's flood control system and ensured their progress through the annual appropriations process. Since 1998, he has also advocated and built support for a "Mini-Raise" at the Folsom Dam that would achieve Sacramento's long-sought goal of 200-year flood protection.

Key Events:

Gained Congressional Approval of \$57 Million "Common Elements" Flood Control Project.

Given the 1996 defeat of the Auburn Dam, Matsui and Sacramento were unsatisfied with further delay and moved to immediately begin improving Sacramento's flood control in achievable ways. While the Army Corps of Engineers continued to evaluate three major alternatives, including a Folsom Dam Modification plan, the Chief of Engineers recommended that the features common to all three plans be authorized as the first component of a comprehensive plan. Matsui ensured that the 1996 Water Resources and Development Act authorized this \$57 million "Common Elements" project, which included: (1) levee modifications along the Lower American and Sacramento Rivers; (2) minor upgrades to the Folsom Reservoir with modification to a flood warning system along the Lower American River; and; (3) continued reoperation of the Folsom Reservoir for flood control. The projects, which will all be completed by 2004, included \$42.7 million in federal money to cover 75% of the program's costs. Matsui's initiative marked the first major progress toward real improvement in Sacramento's flood control system. [PL 104-46] ["Bare-Bones Flood Protection," *Sacramento Bee*, 3/9/96 B6; "Fund Bill for Levees Given Okay in House," *Sacramento Bee*, 7/31/96 B1].

Obtained Folsom Dam Modifications and Further Levee Improvements. With the full support of the Clinton Administration, the City of Sacramento, the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, and his California Senate colleagues, Matsui sought and obtained the inclusion of further projects in the 1999 Water Resources Development Act. The bill authorized \$150 million worth of modifications to Folsom Dam's outlets that will allow operators to optimize dam performance by releasing water earlier and faster in the event of a flood-threatening storm. While Matsui's initial plan called for \$325 million in levee improvement projects that would allow for greater volumes of "stepped-release" water from the Folsom Dam to prevent flooding, this provision was strongly opposed by Auburn Dam advocates. Ultimately, the House passed most of the plan, including the much-needed Folsom Dam modifications and a reduced \$25 million project to strengthen American River levees. Matsui also inserted a provision calling for study of the Folsom mini-raise in preparation for the 2002 WRDA. The Folsom Dam modification project commenced in 2001 and is estimated to take about 5 years. At its completion, it is expected to provide Sacramento with 160-year flood protection. [105th Congress: H.R. 3698, PL 106-53] ["Clinton Budget Proposal Seeks to Speed Region's Levee Repairs," *Sacramento Bee*, 2/6/97 B1; "Flood Plan Has Doolittle Up in Arms," *Sacramento Bee*, 3/11/98 A1; "SAFCA is Following the Right Course," *Sacramento Bee*, 3/19/98 B7; "Flood Projects Get Clinton's Support," *Sacramento Bee*, 4/11/98 A1; "Matsui Launches Flood Bill," *Sacramento Bee*, 4/22/98 A1; "Lawmakers Clash Over Flood Plan," *Sacramento Bee*, 4/23/98 A1; "Dam Foes Align with Matsui," *Auburn Journal*, 6/98.